

The



Bulletin

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KJA

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Happy Pessah

KJA



Acting Rav: Joe Pessah (415) 941-2115

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Past president:	Jacob Masliah	(415) 566 0329
	Joe Abel	(415) 830-4685
	Joseph Moussa	(415) 593-9507

Public Relation & Liaison:	Mourad El Kodsi	(716) 334-2413
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Bulletin Editor	Fred Lichaa	(415) 341-4725
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Note: Address your articles for publishing to:

K J A

P. O. Box 4235 • Mountain View, CA 94040

Board meeting is on the third wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM

Congregation B'nai Israel

1575 Annie Street • Daly City, CA 94015

(415) 994-09757

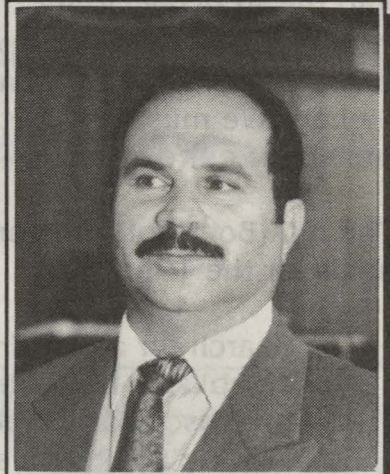
PRESIDENT 'S LETTER

Dear Members & Friends:

1994 was an exceptional and very successful year for KJA in many ways!

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on some of the major accomplishments that were made during 1994.

- Purchased a new synagogue.
- Raised a record amount of money.
- Obtained several new Sephers of Torahs.
- Established and organized a library.
- Held the very first Bat Mitzvah in the Synagogue.
- Commenced Shabat family prayer, first Saturday of the month where children and youth participate.
- Established a Sisterhood committee.



While there were many individuals and families who contributed to the 1994 success, I would like to take this time to recognize the following people:

Mr. & Mrs. Elie Massuda: For their major donation that allowed us to purchase a special Sepher Torah from Israel.

Mr. Paul Nounou: For finding the new Synagogue and for his efforts to help us purchase it.

Mr. Mourad El Kodsi: For spending over 1 month of his own time for establishing our library.

Mr. Maurice Darwish: For marketing and selling our house in San Francisco.

As we enter 1995, we find ourselves challenged by many new different tasks and raised expectations. We must fully examine our jobs and our ways of doing things because operating a Synagogue requires many skills and experiences. Furthermore, the maintenance and upkeep costs are much higher. We must introduce programs that will directly meet the needs and benefit of our community and young generation.

The KJA Board of Directors has set the following high priority issues as its goals for the 1995 year.

1. Search for a part time Rabbi.
2. Establish a reasonable operating budget.
3. Increase children education and youth participation in prayers.
4. Provide additional services and activities to the community.

We have the capability to make 1995 even more successful. Let's work together to make a difference and go beyond our set goals. With your inputs and continuous support, I am confident 1995 will be another year of significant achievements.

Sincerely,

Maurice Pessah



LEARNING CURVES

"Dad, will you do my homework?"

"I'm sorry," replied the father. "It wouldn't be right."

"Well," said the boy, "at least you could try."

The following article was published in the Jewish Bulletin, September 9, 1994

Karaite move to new home in vacated Daly City synagogue

By Elaine Laporte

The Karaite Jews of America welcomed the New Year with a move from their San Francisco house on 42nd Avenue to a vacated synagogue on Annie Street in Daly City.



For a congregation that has been trying for at least 20 years to put down roots, the New Year's festivities at the Daly City synagogue were especially sweet. Two days before Rosh Hashanah, more than 100 members of the sect, which differs from mainstream Judaism in reflecting the Talmud, celebrated as their leaders placed Torah scrolls inside the ark.

The Karaites' new home is the former site of Congregation B'nai Israel, which merged last spring with San Francisco's Congregation B'nai Emunah.

Acting Rav (spiritual leader) Joe Pessah had no prepared speech to mark last Sunday's ceremony. "There are no words," he said simply.

A procession began in the parking lot shortly before noon. Everyone put on blue or white satin yarmulkes trimmed with gold or silver braid—including a toddler in a tropical shirt, who kept chasing the yarmulke that fell repeatedly from his head.

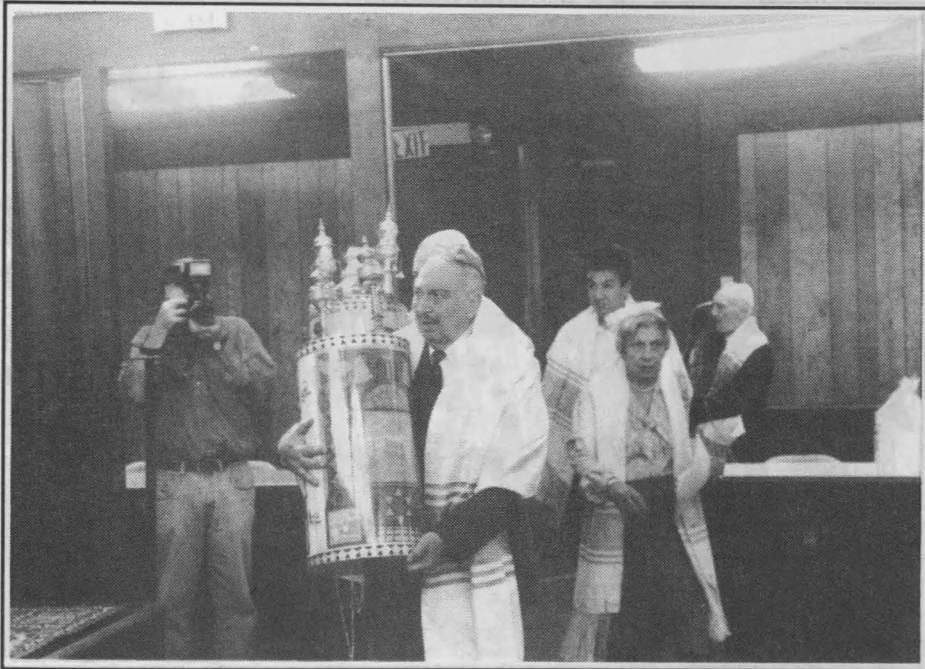
Several men and women donned white tallit with the distinctive blue threads in the tassels. Someone started singing in Hebrew. Seven synagogue leaders-



Jacob Masliah, Joe Abel, Joseph Moussa, Maurice Pessah, Emiel Kheder, Elie Massouda and David Moussa - walked through the crowd, carrying the scrolls into the synagogue as the congregation followed, chanting and singing. Inside the wood-paneled sanctuary, worshippers removed their shoes and stood in a circle on red-and-blue Oriental rugs. Usually women sit apart from men, but Sunday they stood side by side, participating fully in the ceremony. The Torah-bearers approached the platform, set down the scrolls and briefly knelt with foreheads touching the floor. When it was time to install the scrolls in the ark, a teenage boy parted the curtain and opened the doors. Pessah offered a prayer. "We thank God this synagogue did not close," he said, "that it remains in Jewish hands."

Members of the congregation know what it's like to lose a synagogue. It has happened twice before; when they fled Cairo after the Six Day War, and again last spring in San Francisco after an unsuccessful bid to build onto their house at 1445-42nd Ave., which they've owned for three years.

"This is very sentimental for us" explained Pessah after the service. "We took this as being a God-given opportunity to reward us for what we have lost."



The B'nai Israel building became available just as the San Francisco Planning Commission rejected the congregation's plan to build a new hall in its backyard. The move had also been opposed by neighbors in the residential area in the Sunset.

"We felt we were not welcome," said past president Joseph Moussa, speaking without bitterness outside the new synagogue, which was decorated with blue-and-white balloons and streamers. "God closed the door over there and opened it up there."

"It feels closer to our heart, this one," said member Mona Cohen Aslan of San Jose. "The other one ...was a temporary thing."

The Karaites plan to put their San Francisco house on the market. Meanwhile, members dug deep into their pockets for money to buy their new synagogue for an undisclosed sum.

"We talked to the congregation", said Pessah. "We had an overwhelming response to donate and to loan us money with no interest."

The move also brought together the widely dispersed Karaite community, which prayed in members' homes and at Peninsula Sinai Congregation in



Foster City before it purchased the house in San Francisco. More than 1000 Karaites live in the Bay Area. Some drive 50 miles to attend services. "We are all related," said Aslan. "You can never leave, really."



LAUGHTER, the Best Medicine

I try my best to teach my children good manners. So one day as I set a cup of milk in front of my three-year-old, I asked, "What do you say?" He looked at me thoughtfully, then smiled, lifted the cup and said, "LaChaim"

PURIM



The holiday of Purim is based on the account found in the scroll (Megillah) of Esther. It tells that the king of the Persian empire, Ahasuerus, became angry at his first wife for refusing to appear at a banquet. He had her killed for her disobedience and then began looking for a second wife. Ahasuerus chose a beautiful woman named Esther. Esther was Jewish, but kept this fact a secret as instructed by her uncle Mordechai, an advisor to the king.

Some time after the king married Esther, he appointed a new prime minister named Haman. Haman was an arrogant man and demanded that all people to bow to him. Mordechai, however, refused, as Jews bow only to God. Haman was enraged and wanted Mordechai killed. He was able to convince the king that as revenge, all Jews throughout the world should be executed. Haman cast lots or Purim (similar to throwing dice) to decide which day would be best to destroy the Jews. The 13th of Adar was chosen. Mordechai learned of Haman's plan and told Esther that in order to save her people, she must reveal her Jewish identity to the king. Esther, however, was not allowed to simply request an audience with the king at her will.

Custom held that the queen must instead wait for the king to ask to speak

with her. Esther knew that this matter could not wait and she must approach the king without permission. After fasting and praying for three days (to clear her mind and for strength), she approached the king. Esther explained that if Haman were to kill all Jews, she must die as well. The King was enraged. He decreed that Haman would be executed instead and Mordechai was appointed prime minister.

Traditional Jews celebrate the Purim holiday on the 14th of Adar (February 25th) with fasting beginning at sunrise on the 13th (February 24th) to commemorate the fast of Esther. The Book of Esther is read on the evening of Purim as well as on the following day. Other Purim observances include: eating a festive meal, giving charity to at least two needy people, and sending at least one package of two different foods to a friend. One traditional food is the Hamantashen, a three-cornered pastry filled with poppy seeds, prunes, apricots or other fruit. Some say the Hamantashen is symbolic of Haman's pockets, others say it resembles Haman's three-corned hat. Sephardic Jews eat a pastry shaped like an ear which is called Orejas de Haman or Haman's ears. The Hebrew name for the pastries, Ozney Haman, also means Haman's ears.



Hear Ye!! Hear Ye!!

Here is some good news for our young High school graduates and our College and University students who are looking for assistance to help them as they continue their education.



If you are in need of assistance to continue your education, the KJA. received some Funds especially ear marked for supplementing the cost of educating our youth. The supplement Fund will loan the student funds on a quarterly basis. The interest rate is zero percent to the Karaite student for the first five

years. Thereafter a repayment plan based on earnings will be worked out, so that others can have the same chance.

If you, or someone you know is in need of assistance to continue their education give Joe Pessah or Abe Massuda a call and we will be happy to give you the details.

If you want to contribute to the Education Fund, the Library Fund, or any fund of your choice and give someone a helping hand, please send your contributions to the KJA. and ear mark it to the appropriate fund.

Needy Fund

From time to time we see or hear about people who are needy, the KJA. has some funds that were donated for this purpose.

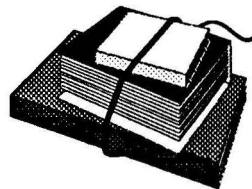
So, if you know someone who needs some assistance, have them call Mr. Jack Masliah, Joe Pessah or Abe Massuda. Your call will be confidential and only the person you talk to will know the details.



The Library in the Karaite Synagogue

Jews in general give high priority to learning. No wonder that every synagogue and Jewish center cares to keep a good library.

From the day the new Karaite synagogue was acquired, the KJA board tried to establish a new library. The board asked Sarah Ajami to take an inventory of the books that



were already there. The president Maurice Pessah asked me to prepare a list of books on Karaites and Karaism. Once the list was studied and accepted, I put all my efforts to acquire those books. Together with Sarah Ajami we cataloged the old and the new books.

Now there are two sections in the library of the Karaite Synagogue and they are both at your disposal.

The original books obtained with the Synagogue are arranged according to their subject matter. The books in this section, deal with Jewish History, Jewish Laws, legends and stories of the Bible. There are some good biographies of great Jewish men and women. There are several books on religion, on the relationship with Christianity, philosophy, sociology and psychology. There are more than 150 novels and most important, some are written for children.

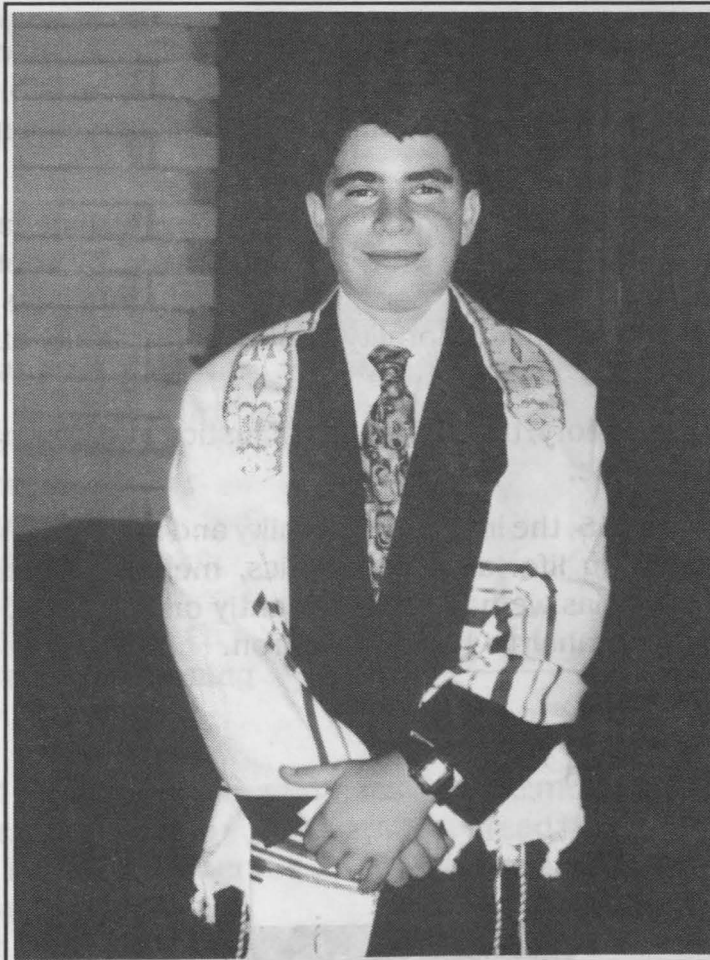
The new section contains books and articles on Karaite and Karaism. There are 30 books and we will continue our efforts to acquire more books. Some of these books deal with the history of Karaites in Russia, Poland, Europe and the modern history of the Karaites of Egypt. There are many articles about the relationship between the Karaites and the Rabbanites, the Karaites and Christians and the Karaites and Muslims. A good collection about our great Karaite scholar, Al Kirkisani of the tenth century is available which gives a bright picture of Karaism during its golden age. Also there are some good articles about our modern scholar, the late Mourad Farag. Recently Joe Pessah donated to the library several good books on the history of the Jews in the world, the wars of Israel (in Hebrew, English and French) and other subjects.

He has also donated more than 200 microfilms on the works of our songs which need cataloging.

The library is ready to serve you and we are looking forward to seeing you.

Mourad El Kodsí

BAR MITZVAH



Michael Ovadia, son of Isaac and Magda Ovadia, became Bar Mitzvah on October 29, 1994

CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY

When all the world worshipped material idols, Abraham radically and courageously preached that there is only one, invisible and powerful G-d. Now, thousands of years later, this message deserves a meaningful and objective appraisal.

Idol worship is characterized by rigidity, stagnation and disregard for morality. Besides being illogical, it serves only those in power. By contrast, however, Abraham's message preached compassion, righteousness and an ever-progressing pursuit for higher morality. It serves Humanity at large to live in harmony.

For the first time in history, the awareness of justice and compassion sparked in the hearts of people.

Today, in the year 5755, the impact of morality and righteousness is reflected in all fields of human life: arts, economics, media, politics, religion and science. No wonder, as we have seen recently on TV, Jews, Christians and Muslims venerate Abraham's tomb at Hebron.

Barry Mourad
8 Morrice Street
Lane Cove N.S.W. 2066
Australia

FROM THE EDITOR

My thanks to all the people who contributed materials to this bulletin. Please note that the dead line to submit material is December 31 and June 30. The address to submit any article and my phone# are on page-2

FRED LICHAA

KARAITE GRANDMOTHER CELEBRATES BAT MITZVAH - AT 70

ELAINE LAPORTE

Bulletin Staff

Jewish Bulletin

September 23, 1994

When Sarina Pessah was a girl in Cairo, Egypt, she was allowed to learn Hebrew, but she didn't get an opportunity to have a bat mitzvah. Fifty-seven years later, at the Karaite Jews of America's new synagogue in Daly City, Pessah celebrated her coming of age—at 70.



"They opened the Torah," she said, recalling the moment in the service that was hers. "They told me, 'Do you remember to read Hebrew?' and I read. I was so happy that I still remember the Hebrew, because in Egypt, we don't speak Hebrew; we speak Arabic."

Her oldest son, Joe Pessah, who is the acting rav (rabbi) of the synagogue, said the teaching of Hebrew was allowed in Egypt until the 50's, when Egypt and other Arab countries stepped up their attacks against Israel. Later during the Six Day War, Karaite men were imprisoned and the women and children were driven out of the country.

"We had permission to learn Hebrew" recalled Sarina Pessah who now lives in Redwood City "but after 20 years...they said no Hebrew. Only my generation learned. I taught my kids also."

Joe Pessah remembered how his mother once corrected his Hebrew when he was a child in Egypt.

"I was 7 years old," he said during the buffet luncheon of salads and cold chicken that followed the Shabbat service. "I'd just gone to Hebrew school. I learned my alphabet. Then I went to her. It was a challenge."

He started reciting his lessons to his mother, but he stumbled over a letter. When she filled it in for him quickly, he was surprised. "Oh, you know Hebrew, too?" he said.

"You want to hear the prayer?" Sarina Pessah asked, after cutting the challah with the rabbi. She then repeated the prayer she had recited during the service. The congregation "had to repeat after me," she stated proudly. "It worked very well. Everybody was happy."

Jacques Pessah, another son was beaming. "My mom is the best," he said after posing for pictures with his brothers and their mother, all wearing prayer shawls and *kippot*. He had flown in from Los Angeles. Another brother Benjamin Pessah, came from San Diego. His uncle, Joshua Hayne, and his wife, Esther arrived from Kiriot Malakhil Israel. In fact, his mother said no one was missing. All seven of her children were there, including 15 grandchildren and a cousin.

"I should own an airline today," noted Jacques Pessah with a grin.

Enjoying lunch together on the synagogue's sun-drenched patio draped with garlands of blue cloth and asparagus ferns, the Pessah clan tries never to miss an opportunity to celebrate a significant occasion. "The whole family is always together for all the holidays," stressed Jacques Pessah's sister, Sheilla Sutherland of Menlo Park.

Both she and her sister, Jacqueline Lichaa, of Foster City, have not had bat mitzvah celebrations—at least not yet. "I have to get through with my kids first," said Sutherland, who has three children: Jason, 17; Evan, 15; and Sabrina, 9. Jason has had a bar mitzvah ceremony, but Evan has not. "Probably I'll have one when I'm 70, just like my grandmother," he remarked. Sarina Pessah's five sons all had bar mitzvah celebrations. Now the grandsons are reaching manhood. But they're not too old to benefit from the attention only a grandmother can provide.

Joe Pessah's 16 year old son, Jacob, went to stay with his grandmother in Redwood City last year, ostensibly to help her.

"She had a problem with her foot, so I went there to take care of her," he said during lunch. "But then, after time, I realized really I wasn't taking care of her; she was taking care of me."

The family seemed to be in agreement that Sarina Pessah's 70th birthday was the perfect day for her symbolic passage into womanhood. "We came up with it because we thought it was the appropriate time for her to have something that she has always wanted," said Sutherland.

"She gets to be 13 and have one more turn in life," added Jacques Pessah. Why didn't she do it sooner?

"I don't know," said Jacob Pessah. "She wasn't 70 sooner."



ZA' ATAR

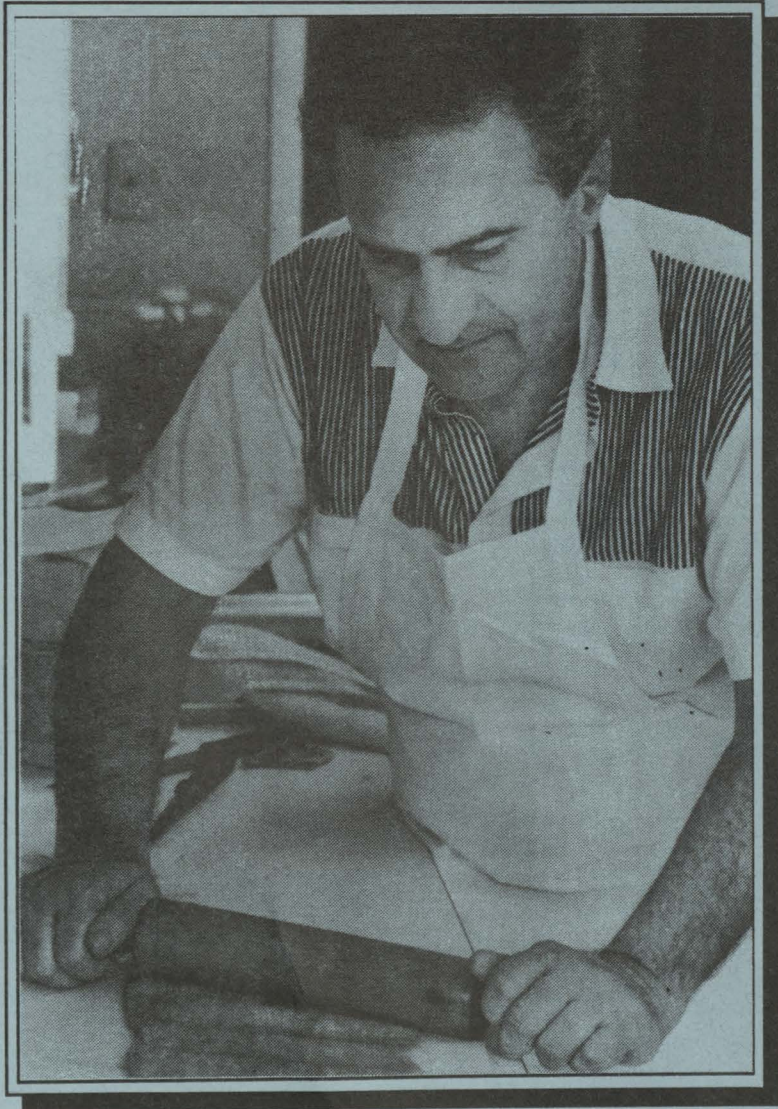
Few Israelis know the Hebrew name of *Majorana syriaca*. They usually call it by its Arabic name, za'atar: the Hebrew is eizov matzui. This plant, a kind of oregano, is so common as a kitchen herb that it's a rare cook who doesn't use it in spaghetti sauce or in all sorts of tomato-based dishes. Many people, particularly those who favor Oriental food, love bread with a bit of olive oil and a pinch of za'atar.

The plant was well known in antiquity for its pungent fragrance and it was one of the herbs used for purification rites in the Temple in Jerusalem. Because of its tall, strong, central stem, it was considered by our forefathers to be the smallest of the trees, rather than a bush. It is a close relative of hyssop and thyme.



HAPPY PESSAH
TO ALL
THE KARAITES JEWS OF AMERICA

TRADITION



***Fred Lichaa rolls out dough while making Massah
a traditional Karaite Pessah***

